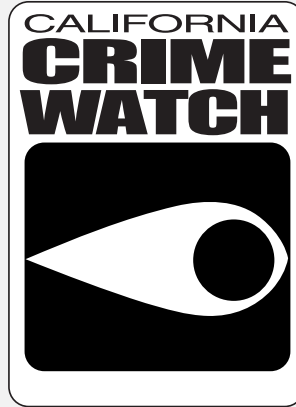


Make sure that your children know you want to be told about someone who does something confusing to them, like touching, or giving them gifts. Reassure your child and explain they will not be blamed for whatever an adult does to them

Choosing a Preschool, Child Care Center or Family Daycare

Although the vast majority of this nation's pre schools, child care centers and family daycare centers are perfectly safe, recent reports of child sexual abuse in these settings are a source of great concern.

- Find out if the program is reputable and whether any complaints have been made by contacting the State Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division, child care information and referral services or other child care community agencies.
- Find out as much as you can about the teachers and caretakers. Talk to other parents who have used the program.
- Learn about the school's or center's hiring policies and practices. Ask how the organization recruits and selects staff. Find out whether they examine references and employment histories before hiring decisions are made.
- Ask if the center or school welcomes and supports parental participation. Be sensitive to the attitude and degree of openness about such participation.
- Make sure you have the right to drop in and visit the program at any time.
- Make sure you are informed about every planned outing. Never give the organization blanket permission to take your child off the premises.
- Prohibit, in writing, the release of your child to anyone without your explicit authorization. Make sure the program knows who will pick up your child on any given day.



Courtesy of

Office of Criminal Justice Planning
1130 K Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 324-9100

For more information on this program in your community, contact:

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION

TIPS TO PARENTS

OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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Listen and Talk With Your Children

Good communication between you and your children is the most important way to keep them safe from sexual abuse. A trusting and loving relationship creates a climate in which children are not afraid to confide in their parents. This may be difficult, especially for working parents and parents of adolescents.

- Talk to your children every day and take time to listen and observe. Learn as many details as possible about your children's activities and feelings. Encourage them to share their concerns.
- Explain to your children that they have the right to say no to anyone who might try to touch them.
- Tell your children that some adults may try to hurt them or make them do things they do not feel comfortable doing. Often these adults tell children to keep what they are doing a secret.
- Explain that some adults may even threaten children by saying their parents will be hurt if the children ever tell the secret. Tell your children that an adult who does this is wrong.
- Tell your children that some adults they know, trust and love (such as a friend, a babysitter, a relative or a teacher) might try to touch them inappropriately. Try not to scare your children. Tell them that most adults never do this and are deeply concerned about protecting children from harm.

Safety Rules Start Early

- Children are taught how to cross the street, not to play with matches, and water safety. Precautions about sexual abuse can and should be included in these general discussions.
- Information can be introduced as early as age two. Even young children can understand these concepts.
- Children, provided with accurate information at an early age, can learn to avoid or stop sexual advances. An unprepared child may be too confused or ashamed even to admit an assault has taken place.
- Teach your children what touches are good and what touches are bad. Discuss the fact that touches may be confusing at times, and they may not be sure if the touches are good or bad.

- Teach children a basic working vocabulary for parts of the body.
- Begin discussions slowly and clarify the child's understanding of words. Children's concepts can be very different from adults. Answer questions fully for the age level of the child.
- Problem-solving games, story telling and role playing are ways to talk to children.
- At a minimum, children should be taught to say no, to run away and tell a trusted adult, and to keep telling until someone helps them. Discuss with them whom they can trust.

Observe Physical and Behavioral Signs

Children who are too frightened to talk about sexual molestation may exhibit a variety of physical and behavioral signals. Parents are responsible for noticing symptoms of abuse. Any of these signs are significant:

- Changes in behavior such as withdrawal, fearfulness, crying without provocation.
- Appetite disturbances.
- Recurrent nightmares, disturbed sleep patterns or fear of the dark.
- Returning to more infantile behavior such as bedwetting, thumb sucking or excessive crying.
- Torn or stained underclothing.
- Vaginal or rectal bleeding, pain, itching, swollen genitals, vaginal discharge or sexually transmitted diseases.
- Unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters, expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child of that age.
- Fear of a person or an intense dislike at being left somewhere or with someone.
- Other behavioral signals such as aggressive or disruptive behavior, running away, failing in school or delinquent behavior.

Finally, do not blame yourself. Sexual abuse is a fact in our society. Many individuals who molest children find work or are involved in community activities which give them access to children. The vast majority of abuse occurs

in situations where the child knows and trusts the adult. Remember, a community and national consciousness is needed before we can stamp out sexual molestation.

If You Think Your Child Has Been Abused ...

- Believe the child. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse.
- Commend the child for telling you about the experience.
- Assure the child that you will protect him or her.
- Express your support for the child. Children's greatest fear is that they are at fault and responsible for the incident. Helping your child remove self-blame is of paramount importance.
- Recognize that your acceptance is important to the child. Control your own reaction. Do not express your horror about the abuse.
- Do not go to the school or program where your child says something happened to talk about your concern. Instead, report the suspected abuse to a social services agency and/or the police.
- Find a specialized agency that evaluates sexual abuse victims—a hospital, child welfare agency, community mental health program or child abuse treatment center. Keep asking until you find a group or an individual with appropriate knowledge to assist you.
- Search for a physician with the experience and training to detect and recognize sexual abuse when you seek a medical examination. Community sexual abuse treatment programs, children's hospitals and medical societies may be sources for referrals.
- Talk with other parents to ascertain if their children exhibit unusual behavior or physical symptoms.
- Remember that taking action is important because other children will continue to be at risk if nothing is done. Child sexual abuse is a community concern.